

Chippewa Shoe Factory

History of Project

The Chippewa Shoe Factory was the last remaining shoe factory structure in Chippewa Falls. The building, constructed in 1910, was vacant for over 17 years. Calls came from every sector of the community for its demolition. Several attempts had been made by various developers to save the building, but financing continued to be a problem.

Scope of Project

Warren Loveland, from Horizon Management Group of La Crosse, drove to Chippewa Falls to look for possible housing developments in historic buildings. He had his eye on the old Catholic High School, because it is highly visible from downtown and overlooks the Chippewa River. Main Street Executive Director, Kathy La Plante, arranged for him to look at the old school but also suggested he consider the shoe factory. Before he left Chippewa Falls that day, Mr. Loveland took out an option on the factory.

The city worked hand-in-hand with Horizon Management on the financing package. Within three months, a tax increment financing (TIF) district was created and \$198,000 was loaned to Horizon Management. In addition, the developers received a \$288,000 loan from the City with funds from a Community Development Block Grant. Other funds included a Main Street Low Interest Façade Loan, historic tax credits, housing tax credits from the

county, and local bank financing. The investment group brought \$942,000 in equity to the project.



Chippewa Shoe Factory, today.

The building underwent extensive rehabilitation. One of the previous building owners had knocked out many of the stone window sills. These had to be replaced, as did a number of blocked-in windows. A total of 258 windows were custom-crafted and installed. The interior beams of the building were left in place and became part of the décor in the unique apartments. The building now includes seven two-bedroom apartments, 23 one-bedroom apartments, and two efficiency units. The apartments opened for tenants in July 1995. Since the building is located near the heart of downtown residents are within walking distance of a grocery store, drug stores, the library, restaurants, retail stores, and area churches.

Cost of project

\$1.9 million

For more information, call the Wisconsin Main Street Program at (608) 266-7531.